

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9738
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL SINGAPORE 0937

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, ASEAN, SN
SUBJECT: US-ASEAN MEETING IN WASHINGTON

REF: STATE 47752

1. ALTHOUGH GOS HAS BEEN PRE-OCCUPIED WITH CURRENT SINGAPORE VISIT OF THAI PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK, AMBASSADOR WAS ABLE TO MENTION TO MFA PERM SEC CHIA CHEONG FOOK ON FEBRUARY 26 U.S. INTEREST IN HAVING U.S.-ASEAN WASHINGTON TALKS HELD AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. DCM FOLLOWED UP FEBRUARY 28 WITH MFA POLITICAL DIVISION DIRECTOR TAN BOON SENG (WHO IS ALSO SINGAPORE'S REP ON ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE).

2. DCM TOLD TAN THAT USG HAD NO INTENTION OF DICTATING TO ASEAN AND WOULD ABIDE BY ASEAN DECISION, BUT BELIEVED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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WASHINGTON MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL RATHER THAN OFFICIAL LEVEL WOULD BE IN EVERYONE'S BEST INTEREST. HE SAID THAT WE WOULD TRY TO HAVE SECRETARY VANCE HEAD THE U.S. DELEGATION AND WOULD ALSO SEEK SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL'S PARTICIPATION. PRESIDENT CARTER HAD ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT HE MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN SOME WAY. DCM NOTED THAT WE CONSIDERED IT IMPORTANT THAT ASEAN BE SEEN AND HEARD MORE PROMINENTLY IN

THE U.S. AND THAT HE HOPED THE ASEAN MINISTERS WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND OTHER PROMINENT AMERICANS AS WELL AS ADMINISTRATION FIGURES.

3. TAN IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THAT SINGAPORE HAD NO OBJECTION AT ALL TO MEETING AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, AND WAS SO INFORMING AMBASSADOR COOMARASWAMY IN WASHINGTON. WHATEVER UNCERTAINTY MAY HAVE DEVELOPED ON THIS QUESTION AMONG THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, HE FELT, PROBABLY STEMMED FROM THE MANILA MEETING, WHERE THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS WERE REPRESENTED AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL WHILE U.S. REPRESENTATION WAS OF LOWER RANK. IF THE U.S. WERE TO BE REPRESENTED AT THE CABINET LEVEL IN WASHINGTON, HE EXPECTED THE ASEAN COUNTRIES WOULD BE QUITE PREPARED TO DO THE SAME.

4. DCM RAISED MATTER OF TIMING, NOTING THAT THE U.S. PREFERENCE WAS FOR A MEETING AROUND THE END OF JULY. TAN REPLIED THAT THIS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT FOR THE ASEAN COUNTRIES. HE CONSIDERED IT ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THERE BE ADEQUATE ADVANCE PREPARATION BEFORE THE WASHINGTON MEETING. "A MEETING WITHOUT PROPER PREPARATIONS WOULD BE WORSE THAN NONE AT ALL". EXPRESSING DOUBT THAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES WOULD BE READY BY JULY, HE THOUGHT THAT SEPTEMBER MIGHT BE THE EARLIEST FEASIBLE TIME.

5. DCM MENTIONED THE 11 ASEAN MEMORANDA AT THE MANILA MEETING. WE HAD NOT ORIGINALLY REALIZED, HE SAID, THAT THE ASEAN
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COUNTRIES EXPECTED WRITTEN REPLIES TO THEM IN ADDITION TO UNDER SECRETARY COOPER'S ORAL RESPONSES. NOW THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THIS POINT, WE HOPED TO PROVIDE WRITTEN REPLIES SHORTLY. TAN SAID THIS SHOULD BE HELPFUL IN PREPARING FOR THE WASHINGTON MEETING, ALTHOUGH HE STILL FELT THAT JULY MIGHT BE TOO EARLY.
HOLDRIDGE

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